

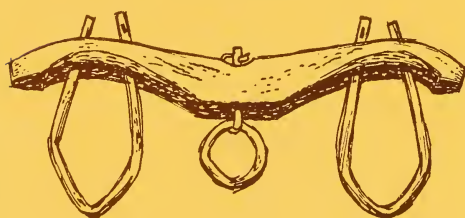


POETRY
AND
PROSE
BY
A. LINCOLN



LINCOLN ROOM

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
LIBRARY



MEMORIAL

the Class of 1901

founded by


HARLAN HOYT HORNER

and

HENRIETTA CALHOUN HORNER

AMERICAN KEEPSAKE NO. 1





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

POETRY AND PROSE
BY A. LINCOLN

POETRY AND PROSE

BY A. LINCOLN

Edited, with an Introduction,

by

Paul M. Angle

and

Earl Schenck Miers



Privately Printed at

KINGSPORT PRESS, INC.

Kingsport, Tennessee

COPYRIGHT © 1956

BY PAUL M. ANGLE AND EARL SCHENCK MIERS

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

973,7263
K 1956

Lincoln B. m.

FOR WALTER F. SMITH

10/16/66 g. King of the Hill

CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	11
---------------------	----

POETRY

My Childhood's Home I See Again	19
Matthew Gentry	21
The Bear Hunt	24

A STORY

The Trailor Murder Case	31
<i>Notes</i>	43
<i>A Postscript to the Story</i>	45

INTRODUCTION

The three poems and the story in this volume were written in 1846, the year that Lincoln ran for Congress. All that we can know about these productions of A. Lincoln, Author, must be drawn from the few extant letters, covering a period of a year and a day, that comprise the unique "literary correspondence" between the poet-mystery writer of Springfield and Andrew Johnston of Quincy, Illinois.

Johnston, like Lincoln, was a lawyer and a Whig politician. During the first state convention of the party, held at Springfield in October, 1839, Johnston served as secretary. In all probability, this was the occasion of his first meeting with Lincoln. In the legislative session that began a few weeks later, Johnston was elected assistant clerk of the House of Representatives, where Lincoln led the Whig minority. Political association turned into friendship.

Johnston's relationship with Lincoln has kept his name in history; so has the fact that he was the uncle of George E. Pickett, who led the vain and bloody charge at Gettysburg. The story persists that Lincoln obtained Pickett's appointment to West Point, but that tale appears to be more fanciful than actual. All the evidence points to the conclusion that Lincoln's former law partner, John T. Stuart, managed the affair, although it is certainly true that Pickett did live with Johnston in Quincy for some time in an apparent effort to make himself eligible for the appointment.

When, "feeling a little poetic this evening," Lincoln wrote to Johnston on February 24, 1846, he gave as his reason: "I have concluded to redeem my promise . . . by sending you the piece you expressed the wish to have." The source of the enclosure for Johnston went back to Lincoln's youthful days in New Salem when Jason Duncan introduced him to "Mortality," a poem by a fellow

Scotsman, William Knox. The fourteen stanzas of Knox's poem, filled with the melancholy romanticism of the early decades of the nineteenth century, entranced Lincoln, and it is probable that he committed all to memory. The opening stanza spoke for the others:

Introduction

*Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of lightning, a break of the wave,
He passes from life to his rest in the grave.*

Loving the old poem, perhaps even finding comfort in its concluding thought that

*'Tis the wink of an eye—'tis the draught of the
breath—
From the blossom of health to the paleness of
death,*

Lincoln still could not identify Knox as the author of "Mortality." When later Johnston inquired if his Springfield friend had written the verses himself, Lincoln replied: "Beyond all question, I am not the author. I would give all I am worth, and go in debt, to be able to write so fine a piece as I think that is. Neither do I know who is the author. I met it in a straggling form in a newspaper last summer, and I remember to have seen it once before, about fifteen years ago, and this is all I know about it."

In the same letter in which Lincoln disavowed the authorship of "Mortality," he thanked Johnston for sending him a parody of Poe's "The Raven," which had been published only a little more than a year earlier. "I have never seen Poe's 'Raven,'" Lincoln wrote; "and I very well know that a parody is almost entirely dependent for its interest upon the reader's acquaintance with the original. Still there is enough in the polecat, self-considered, to afford one several hearty laughs. I think four or five of the last stanzas are decidedly funny, particularly where Jeremiah 'scrubbed and washed, and prayed and fasted.' "

“The Pole-cat,” by Marmaduke Mar-Rhyme—could Johnston have been the author?—was published in the *Quincy Whig*, March 18, 1846. It consists of fourteen stanzas. The following, which amused Lincoln especially, is the thirteenth:

*All that night I washed and scrubbed me,
long with soap and sand I rubbed me,
Still next day my dear wife snubbed me,
“Jeremiah! how you stink!”
Once more to the creek I hasted;
scrubbed and washed, prayed, and fasted;
All, alas! was labor wasted,
by that fair stream’s flowery brink,
Vain were soap, sand, prayer, and fasting,
by that fair stream’s flowery brink,
“Jeremiah! how you stink!”*

Introduction

The sending of “Mortality” to Johnston well might have been only a pretext, disguising the real motive that led Lincoln to initiate their literary correspondence: “By the way, how would you like to see a piece of poetry of my own making? I have a piece that is almost done, but I find a deal of trouble to finish it.” This poem was “My Childhood’s Home I See Again,” which Lincoln revised rather studiously before he sent it with another letter to Johnston on April 18th. Lincoln explained to the Quincy attorney the circumstances that had inspired his effort:

“. . . In the fall of 1844, thinking I might aid some to carry the State of Indiana for Mr. Clay, I went into the neighborhood in that State in which I was raised, where my mother and only sister were buried, and from which I had been absent about fifteen years. That part of the country is, within itself, as unpoetical as any spot of the earth; but still, seeing it and its objects and inhabitants aroused feelings in me which were certainly poetry; though whether my expression of those feelings is poetry is quite another question. When I got to writing, the change of subjects divided the thing

into four little divisions or cantos, the first only of which I send you now and may send the others hereafter."

An additional "canto"—it is reproduced here as the second poem—went to Johnston on September 6th, and again Lincoln had a story to tell about his poetry:

Introduction

"... The subject of the present one is an insane man. His name is Matthew Gentry. He is three years older than I, and when we were boys we went to school together. He was rather a bright lad, and the son of *the* rich man of our very poor neighborhood. At the age of nineteen he unaccountably became furiously mad, from which condition he gradually settled down into harmless insanity. When, as I told you in my other letter I visited my old home in the fall of 1844, I found him still lingering in this wretched condition. In my poetizing mood I could not forget the impressions his case made upon me."

If Lincoln sent an explanation with his other poem, "The Bear Hunt," the letter has never come to light. But years later, in another connection, he characterized the environment which inspired the effort. Late in 1859, when he began to contemplate the possibility that he might be the presidential candidate of his party, he wrote a brief autobiography. In that he described with bare realism the southwestern Indiana region in which his father settled in 1816. One sentence read: "It was a wild region, with many bears and other wild animals still in the woods." Beyond doubt, "The Bear Hunt" recounts a boyhood experience.

Johnston was impressed with the poetry that reached him from Springfield, and asked for permission to publish it. On February 25, 1847, Lincoln replied: "... To say the least, I am not at all displeased with your proposal to publish the poetry, or doggerel, or whatever else it may be called, which I sent you. I consent that it may be done, together with the third canto [The Bear Hunt], which I now send you."

The Quincy *Whig* for May 5, 1847 published anonymously the first two poems or "cantos," to which Johnston gave the main title of "The Return" and the subtitles of "Part 1—Reflection" and

“Part II—The Maniac.” Portions of Lincoln’s letters were used as “prefatory remarks.” The *Whig* did not carry “The Bear Hunt,” suggesting that Johnston did not consider it the equal of its companion pieces.

Johnston also was the recipient of Lincoln’s one prose effort, “The Traylor Murder Case.” Here Lincoln simply set down, in strong, sinewy sentences, the story of a bizarre incident that had thrown Springfield into near-hysteria in the early summer of 1841. At the time he had written a brief account to an old friend, Joshua F. Speed, in a letter that began: “We have had the highest state of excitement here for a week past that our community has ever witnessed; and, although the public feeling is now somewhat allayed, the curious affair which aroused it, is very far from being, even yet, cleared of mystery.” Now, almost four years later, Lincoln reconstructed the case for Johnston. The narrative was published anonymously in the Quincy *Whig* for April 15, 1846, and reprinted a week later in the *Sangamo Journal*. In an editorial preface the *Whig* commented:

“The following narrative has been handed us for publication by a member of the bar. There is no doubt of the truth of every fact stated; and the whole affair is of so extraordinary a character as to entitle it to publication, and commend it to the attention of those at present engaged in discussing reforms in criminal jurisprudence, and the abolition of capital punishment. ED. WHIG.”

The tantalizing mysteries with which Lincoln leaves his reader at the end of “The Traylor Murder Case” have been explained in “The Postscript to the Story” with which this volume concludes.

*

For the text of Lincoln’s poems and story we have followed *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Roy P. Basler, Editor; Rutgers University Press, 1953.

PAUL M. ANGLE

EARL SCHENCK MIERS

July, 1955

POETRY

My Childhood's Home I See Again

My childhood's home I see again,
And sadden with the view;
And still, as memory crowds my brain,
There's pleasure in it too.

O Memory! thou midway world
'Twixt earth and paradise,
Where things decayed and loved ones lost
In dreamy shadows rise,

And, freed from all that's earthly vile,
Seem hallowed, pure, and bright,
Like scenes in some enchanted isle
All bathed in liquid light.

As dusky mountains please the eye
When twilight chases day;
As bugle-notes that, passing by,
In distance die away;

As leaving some grand waterfall,
We, lingering, list its roar—
So memory will hallow all
We've known, but know no more.

My Childhood's Home

I See Again

Near twenty years have passed away
Since here I bid farewell
To woods and fields, and scenes of play,
And playmates loved so well.

Where many were, but few remain
Of old familiar things;
But seeing them, to mind again
The lost and absent brings.

The friends I left that parting day,
How changed, as time has sped!
Young childhood grown, strong manhood gray,
And half of all are dead.

I hear the loved survivors tell
How nought from death could save,
Till every sound appears a knell,
And every spot a grave.

I range the fields with pensive tread,
And pace the hollow rooms,
And feel (companion of the dead)
I'm living in the tombs.

Matthew Gentry

But here's an object more of dread
Than ought the grave contains—
A human form with reason fled,
While wretched life remains.

Poor Matthew! Once of genius bright,
A fortune-favored child—
Now locked for aye, in mental night,
A haggard mad-man wild.

Poor Matthew! I have ne'er forgot,
When first, with maddened will,
Yourself you maimed, your father fought,
And mother strove to kill;

When terror spread, and neighbours ran,
Your dange'rous strength to bind;
And soon, a howling crazy man
Your limbs were fast confined.

How then you strove and shrieked aloud,
Your bones and sinews bared;
And fiendish on the gazing crowd,
With burning eye-balls glared—

And begged, and swore, and wept and prayed,
With maniac laugh[ter?] joined—
How fearful were those signs displayed
By pangs that killed thy mind!

Matthew Gentry

And when at length, tho' drear and long,
Time soothed thy fiercer woes,
How plaintively thy mournful song
Upon the still night rose.

I've heard it oft, as if I dreamed,
Far distant, sweet, and lone—
The funeral dirge, it ever seemed
Of reason dead and gone.

To drink it's strains, I've stole away,
All stealthily and still,
Ere yet the rising God of day
Had streaked the Eastern hill.

Air held his breath; trees, with the spell,
Seemed sorrowing angels round,
Whose swelling tears in dew-drops fell
Upon the listening ground.

But this is past; and nought remains,
That raised thee o'er the brute.
Thy piercing shrieks, and soothing strains,
Are like, forever mute.

Now fare thee well—more thou the *cause*,
Than *subject* now of woe.
All mental pangs, by time's kind laws,
Hast lost the power to know.

Matthew Gentry

O death! Thou awe-inspiring prince,
That keepst the world in fear;
Why dost thou tear more blest ones hence,
And leave him ling'ring here?

The Bear Hunt

A wild-bear chace, didst never see?
Then hast thou lived in vain.
Thy richest bump of glorious glee,
Lies desert in thy brain.

When first my father settled here,
'Twas then the frontier line:
The panther's scream, filled night with fear
And bears preyed on the swine.

But wo for Bruin's short lived fun,
When rose the squealing cry;
Now man and horse, with dog and gun,
For vengeance, at him fly.

A sound of danger strikes his ear;
He gives the breeze a snuff:
Away he bounds, with little fear,
And seeks the tangled *rough*.

On press his foes, and reach the ground,
Where's left his half munched meal;
The dogs, in circles, scent around,
And find his fresh made trail.

With instant cry, away they dash,
And men as fast pursue;
O'er logs they leap, through water splash,
And shout the brisk halloo.

The Bear Hunt

Now to elude the eager pack,
Bear shuns the open ground;
Th[r]ough matted vines, he shapes his track
And runs it, round and round.

The tall fleet cur, with deep-mouthed voice,
Now speeds him, as the wind;
While half-grown pup, and short-legged fice,
Are yelping far behind.

And fresh recruits are dropping in
To join the merry *corps*:
With yelp and yell,—a mingled din—
The woods are in a roar.

And round, and round the chace now goes,
The world's alive with fun;
Nick Carter's horse, his rider throws,
And more, Hill drops his gun.

Now sorely pressed, bear glances back,
And lolls his tired tongue;
When as, to force him from his track,
An ambush on him sprung.

The Bear Hunt

Across the glade he sweeps for flight,
And fully is in view.
The dogs, new-fired, by the sight,
Their cry, and speed, renew.

The foremost ones, now reach his rear,
He turns, they dash away;
And circling now, the wrathful bear,
They have him full at bay.

At top of speed, the horse-men come,
All screaming in a row.
"Whoop! Take him Tiger. Seize him Drum."
Bang,—bang—the rifles go.

And furious now, the dogs he tears,
And crushes in his ire.
Wheels right and left, and upward rears,
With eyes of burning fire.

But leaden death is at his heart,
Vain all the strength he plies.
And, spouting blood from every part,
He reels, and sinks, and dies.

And now a dinsome clamor rose,
'Bout who should have his skin;
Who first draws blood, each hunter knows,
This prize must always win.

But who did this, and how to trace
What's true from what's a lie,
Like lawyers, in a murder case
They stoutly *argufy*.

The Bear Hunt

Aforesaid fice, of blustering mood,
Behind, and quite forgot,
Just now emerging from the wood,
Arrives upon the spot.

With grinning teeth, and up-turned hair—
Brim full of spunk and wrath,
He growls, and seizes on dead bear,
And shakes for life and death.

And swells as if his skin would tear,
And growls and shakes again;
And swears, as plain as dog can swear,
That he has won the skin.

Conceited whelp! we laugh at thee—
Nor mind, that not a few
Of pompous, two-legged dogs there be,
Conceited quite as you.

A STORY

The Traylor Murder Case

April 15, 1846

REMARKABLE CASE OF ARREST FOR MURDER.

In the year 1841, there resided, at different points in the State of Illinois, three brothers by the name of Traylor. Their Christian names were William, Henry and Archibald. Archibald resided at Springfield, then as now the Seat of Government of the State. He was a sober, retiring and industrious man, of about thirty years of age; a carpenter by trade, and a bachelor, boarding with his partner in business—a Mr. Myers. Henry, a year or two older, was a man of like retiring and industrious habits; had a family and resided with it on a farm at Clary's Grove, about twenty miles distant from Springfield in a North-westerly direction. William, still older, and with similar habits, resided on a farm in Warren county, distant from Springfield something more than a hundred miles in the same North-westerly direction. He was a widower, with several children. In the neighborhood of William's residence, there was, and had been for several years, a man by the name of Fisher, who was somewhat above the age of fifty; had no family, and no settled home; but who boarded and lodged a while here, and a while there, with the persons for whom he did little jobs of work. His habits were remarkably economical, so

that an impression got about that he had accumulated a considerable amount of money. In the latter part of May in the year mentioned, William formed the purpose of visiting his brothers at Clary's Grove, and Springfield; and Fisher, at the time having his temporary residence at his house, resolved to accompany him. They set out together in a buggy with a single horse. On Sunday Evening they reached Henry's residence, and staid over night. On Monday Morning, being the first Monday of June, they started on to Springfield, Henry accompanying them on horse back. They reached town about noon, met Archibald, went with him to his boarding house, and there took up their lodgings for the time they should remain. After dinner, the three Trailors and Fisher left the boarding house in company, for the avowed purpose of spending the evening together in looking about the town. At supper, the Trailors had all returned, but Fisher was missing, and some inquiry was made about him. After supper, the Trailors went out professedly in search of him. One by one they returned, the last coming in after late tea time, and each stating that he had been unable to discover any thing of Fisher. The next day, both before and after breakfast, they went professedly in search again, and returned at noon, still unsuccessful. Dinner again being had, William and Henry expressed a determination to give up the search and start for their homes. This was remonstrated against by some of the boarders about the house, on the ground that Fisher was somewhere in the vicinity, and would be left without any conveyance, as he and William had come in the same

buggy. The remonstrance was disregarded, and they departed for their homes respectively. Up to this time, the knowledge of Fisher's mysterious disappearance, had spread very little beyond the few boarders at Myers', and excited no considerable interest. After the lapse of three or four days, Henry returned to Springfield, for the ostensible purpose of making further search for Fisher. Procuring some of the boarders, he, together with them and Archibald, spent another day in ineffectual search, when it was again abandoned, and he returned home. No general interest was yet excited. On the Friday, week after Fisher's disappearance, the Postmaster at Springfield received a letter from the Postmaster nearest William's residence in Warren county, stating that William had returned home without Fisher, and was saying, rather boastfully, that Fisher was dead, and had willed him his money, and that he had got about fifteen hundred dollars by it. The letter further stated that William's story and conduct seemed strange; and desired the Postmaster at Springfield to ascertain and write what was the truth in the matter. The Postmaster at Springfield made the letter public, and at once, excitement became universal and intense. Springfield, at that time had a population of about 3500, with a city organization. The Attorney General of the State resided there. A purpose was forthwith formed to ferret out the mystery, in putting which into execution, the Mayor of the city, and the Attorney General took the lead. To make search for, and, if possible, find the body of the man supposed to be murdered, was resolved on as the first step. In pursuance of this, men were

*Search for
the body*

formed into large parties, and marched abreast, in all directions, so as to let no inch of ground in the vicinity, remain unsearched. Examinations were made of cellars, wells, and pits of all descriptions, where it was thought possible the body might be concealed. All the fresh, or tolerably fresh graves at the grave-yard were pried into, and dead horses and dead dogs were disintered, where, in some instances, they had been buried by their partial masters. This search, as has appeared, commenced on Friday. It continued until Saturday afternoon without success, when it was determined to dispatch officers to arrest William and Henry at their residences respectively. The officers started on Sunday Morning, meanwhile, the search for the body was continued, and rumors got afloat of the Trailors having passed, at different times and places, several gold pieces, which were readily supposed to have belonged to Fisher. On Monday, the officers sent for Henry, having arrested him, arrived with him. The Mayor and Attorney Gen'l took charge of him, and set their wits to work to elicit a discovery from him. He denied, and denied, and persisted in denying. They still plied him in every conceivable way, till Wednesday, when, protesting his own innocence, he stated that his brothers, William and Archibald had murdered Fisher; that they had killed him, without his (Henry's) knowledge at the time, and made a temporary concealment of his body; that immediately preceding his and William's departure from Springfield for home, on Tuesday, the day after Fisher's disappearance, William and Archibald communicated the fact to him, and engaged his assistance in making a

permanent concealment of the body; that at the time he and William left professedly for home, they did not take the road directly, but meandering their way through the streets, entered the woods at the North West of the city, two or three hundred yards to the right of where the road where they should have travelled entered them; that penetrating the woods some few hundred yards, they halted and Archibald came a somewhat different route, on foot, and joined them; that William and Archibald then stationed him (Henry) on an old and disused road that ran near by, as a sentinel, to give warning of the approach of any intruder; that William and Archibald then removed the buggy to the edge of a dense brush thicket, about forty yards distant from his (Henry's) position, where, leaving the buggy, they entered the thicket, and in a few minutes returned with the body and placed it in the buggy; that from his station, he could and did distinctly see that the object placed in the buggy was a dead man, of the general appearance and size of Fisher; that William and Archibald then moved off with the buggy in the direction of Hickox's mill pond, and after an absence of half an hour returned, saying they had put him in a safe place; that Archibald then left for town, and he and William found their way to the road, and made for their homes. At this disclosure, all lingering credulity was broken down, and excitement rose to an almost inconceivable height. Up to this time, the well known character of Archibald had repelled and put down all suspicions as to him. Till then, those who were ready to swear that a murder had been committed, were almost as

*A venture
in the thicket*

confident that Archibald had had no part in it. But now, he was seized and thrown into jail; and, indeed, his personal security rendered it by no means objectionable to him. And now came the search for the brush thicket, and the search of the mill pond. The thicket was found, and the buggy tracks at the point indicated. At a point within the thicket the signs of a struggle were discovered, and a trail from thence to the buggy track was traced. In attempting to follow the track of the buggy from the thicket, it was found to proceed in the direction of the mill pond, but could not be traced all the way. At the pond, however, it was found that a buggy had been backed down to, and partially into the water's edge. Search was now to be made in the pond; and it was made in every imaginable way. Hundreds and hundreds were engaged in raking, fishing, and draining. After much fruitless effort in this way, on Thursday Morning, the mill dam was cut down, and the water of the pond partially drawn off, and the same processes of search again gone through with. About noon of this day, the officer sent for William, returned having him in custody; and a man calling himself Dr. Gilmore, came in company with them. It seems that the officer arrested William at his own house early in the day on Tuesday, and started to Springfield with him; that after dark awhile, they reached Leviston in Fulton county, where they stopped for the night; that late in the night this Dr. Gilmore arrived, stating that Fisher was alive at his house; and that he had followed on to give the information, so that William might be released without further trouble; that the officer, distrusting Dr. Gilmore,

refused to release William, but brought him on to Springfield, and the Dr. accompanied them. On reaching Springfield, the Dr. reasserted that Fisher was alive, and at his house. At this the multitude for a time, were utterly confounded. Gilmore's story was communicated to Henry Trailor, who, without faltering, re-affirmed his own story about Fisher's murder. Henry's adherence to his own story was communicated to the crowd, and at once the idea started, and became nearly, if not quite universal that Gilmore was a confederate of the Trailors, and had invented the tale he was telling, to secure their release and escape. Excitement was again at its zenith. About 3 o'clock the same evening, Myers, Archibald's partner, started with a two horse carriage, for the purpose of ascertaining whether Fisher was alive, as stated by Gilmore, and if so, of bringing him back to Springfield with him. On Friday a legal examination was gone into before two Justices, on the charge of murder against William and Archibald. Henry was introduced as a witness by the prosecution, and on oath, re-affirmed his statements, as heretofore detailed; and, at the end of which, he bore a thorough and rigid cross-examination without faltering or exposure. The prosecution also proved by a respectable lady, that on the Monday evening of Fisher's disappearance, she saw Archibald whom she well knew, and another man whom she did not then know, but whom she believed at the time of testifying to be William, (then present;) and still another, answering the description of Fisher, all enter the timber at the North West of town, (the point indicated by Henry,) and after

*Doctor Gilmore
confounds all*

one or two hours, saw William and Archibald return without Fisher. Several other witnesses testified, that on Tuesday, at the time William and Henry professedly gave up the search for Fisher's body and started for home, they did not take the road directly, but did go into the woods as stated by Henry. By others also, it was proved, that since Fisher's disappearance, William and Archibald had passed rather an unusual number of gold pieces. The statements heretofore made about the thicket, the signs of a struggle, the buggy tracks, &c., were fully proven by numerous witnesses. At this the prosecution rested. Dr. Gilmore was then introduced by the defendants. He stated that he resided in Warren county about seven miles distant from William's residence; that on the morning of William's arrest, he was out from home and heard of the arrest, and of its being on a charge of the murder of Fisher; that on returning to his own house, he found Fisher there; that Fisher was in very feeble health, and could give no rational account as to where he had been during his absence; that he (Gilmore) then started in pursuit of the officer as before stated, and that he should have taken Fisher with him only that the state of his health did not permit. Gilmore also stated that he had known Fisher for several years, and that he had understood he was subject to temporary derangement of mind, owing to an injury about his head received in early life. There was about Dr. Gilmore so much of the air and manner of truth, that his statement prevailed in the minds of the audience and of the court, and the Trailors

were discharged; although they attempted no explanation of the circumstances proven by the other witnesses. On the next Monday, Myers arrived in Springfield, bringing with him the now famed Fisher, in full life and proper person. Thus ended this strange affair; and while it is readily conceived that a writer of novels could bring a story to a more perfect climax, it may well be doubted, whether a stranger affair ever really occurred. Much of the matter remains in mystery to this day. The going into the woods with Fisher, and returning without him, by the Trailors; their going into the woods at the same place the next day, after they professed to have given up the search; the signs of a struggle in the thicket, the buggy tracks at the edge of it; and the location of the thicket and the signs about it, corresponding precisely with Henry's story, are circumstances that have never been explained.

*End of a
strange affair*

William and Archibald have both died since—William in less than a year, and Archibald in about two years after the supposed murder. Henry is still living, but never speaks of the subject.

It is not the object of the writer of this, to enter into the many curious speculations that might be indulged upon the facts of this narrative; yet he can scarcely forbear a remark upon what would, almost certainly have been the fate of William and Archibald, had Fisher not been found alive. It seems he had wandered away in mental derangement, and, had he died in this condition, and his body been found in the vicinity, it is difficult to conceive what could have

saved the Trailors from the consequence of having murdered him. Of, if he had died, and his body never found, the case against them, would have been quite as bad, for, although it is a principle of law that a conviction for murder shall not be had, unless the body of the deceased be discovered, it is to be remembered, that Henry testified he saw Fisher's dead body.

NOTES

&

A POSTSCRIPT TO THE STORY

NOTES ON THE POEMS

The original manuscript of *MY CHILDHOOD'S HOME I SEE AGAIN* is in the Library of Congress. The version here printed incorporates the revisions before the poem went to Johnston. Generally, the emendations are slight. In the first stanza, "And gladden with the view" has become "And sadden with the view"; two lines later "sadness" has changed to "pleasure." In the fourth stanza "distant mountains" are now "dusky mountains" and "bugle-tones" are "bugle-notes." In the sixth stanza Lincoln decided upon reflection that "school-mates" should read "playmates."

The final stanza of *MATTHEW GENTRY*, as reprinted here, does not appear in the original manuscript and apparently was written for Lincoln's letter of September 6, 1846.

THE BEAR HUNT, presumably, is the third canto of the original manuscript. Lincoln's letter of February 24, 1846 to Johnston mentioned his intention of writing still another canto, but whether the fourth canto was lost or never written is not known.

A POSTSCRIPT TO THE STORY

Roger W. Barrett in *A Strange Affair* (1936) has supplied a plausible explanation for the behavior of Archibald and William Trailor in parting from Fisher and for their presence in the thicket next day while Henry stood guard. The clue is in Lincoln's 1841 letter to Speed: "Fisher had a serious hurt in his head by the bursting of a gun, since which he had been subject to continued bad health and occasional aberration of mind." Such mental aberration or epileptic fit, Barrett points out, followed by catalepsy, may leave "the sufferer in a state closely resembling, and occasionally mistaken for death."

Thus it can be deduced that Fisher, upon entering the thicket, fell into a cataleptic state which the Trailors mistook for death. Perhaps previously Fisher had entrusted his money to them; perhaps they had stolen the money. In either case, Barrett conjectures, the Trailors determined next day to dispose of Fisher's still rigid body in the mill pond. The immersion revived Fisher; dazed but conscious, he wandered across the prairies.

P. M. A.

E. S. M.

This American Keepsake, *Poetry and Prose by A. Lincoln*, has been printed by Kingsport Press, Inc., in an edition of fifteen hundred copies, solely for distribution among its friends. The plates having been destroyed, there will be no reprint. The book has been designed by Andor Braun and set in Monotype Bulmer.



